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Congress workers celebrate party's victory in Bengaluru | SHASHIDHAR BYRAPPA

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KARNATAKA POLLS 2023 DECIDE

TOTAL SEATS: **224**
● SEATS WON
● VOTE SHARE

HOW THE PENDULUM SWUNG SINCE 1994

	1994	1999	2004	2008	2013	2018	2023
BJP	40 • 16.99%	44 • 20.69%	79 • 28.33%	110 • 33.86%	40 • 19.89%	104 • 36.22%	66 • 36%
Cong	34 • 26.95%	132 • 40.84%	65 • 35.27%	80 • 34.76%	122 • 36.59%	78 • 38.04%	135 • 42.9%
JD	115 • 33.54%						
JD(S)		10 • 10.42%	58 • 20.77%	28 • 18.96%	40 • 20.19%	37 • 18.36%	19 • 13.3%
Oth	35 • 22.52%	38 • 28.05%	22 • 15.63%	06 • 12.42%	32 • 23.33%	05 • 7.38%	04 • 7.8%

VOTER MOOD SWING
+4.86% In favour of Congress compared to 2018
-5.08% Away from JD(S)
-0.22% Away from BJP

ANALYSIS

SANTWANA BHATTACHARYA

A 'BIG TENT' SYMPHONIC ORCHESTRA

IF livelihood issues bent the rainbow towards the Congress in Karnataka, the pot of electoral gold at the end of it gives the Grand Old Party the lifeline it needed in national politics. At 136 seats and 43% vote share, it's the biggest verdict any party has got in the southern state since 1989 — signalling the return of its 'big tent' politics.

In fact, the dual meaning contained at the macro level — connecting the local to the national — is only one of a series of factors that played out like a symphony for the Congress. The final decision on the Chief Minister is pending, but one of the proposals that came to be floated — after the precise contours of the win were clear — was quite revelatory.

It will most likely not come to pass, but as a hypothetical model — a narrative device — it helps frame how the victory was the work of a whole orchestra of factors. This was the idea of having a quartet of faces at the top, with three deputy CMs: one each from the Vokkaliga and Lingayat communities, plus one Dalit leader. That is, assuming Siddaramaiah, from the Kuruba shepherd community who represents the backwards, as the CM.

● Siddaramaiah is the champion of 'Ahinda' politics — itself an amalgam of backwards, minorities and Dalits, a whole sector that has been revived.

● KPCC chief D K Shivakumar, the other strong contender for CM and a shoo-in for the deputy's post, pulled in a sizeable chunk of Vokkaliga votes, reducing the JD(S) to an also-ran and tipping the scales in the crucial Old Mysuru region with 37/59 seats.

● M B Patil, the party's campaign committee chief who had just a month ago hinted at his own candidacy for the top post, can claim to be the face of a vote-swing that would have surprised outside observers: the Lingayats of the north. Even if the 37 Lingayats who have won under the Congress flag answer to all descriptions, including BJP rebel Laxman Savadi, it does speak of a perceptible erosion of a solid vote bank for the BJP.

● The idea of giving Karnataka its first Dalit CM ever, which DKS sparked off in the run-up by mentioning AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge, speaks to the party's very strong showing of 21/36 in seats reserved for SCs. Even 'SC-Left' voters, sought to be benefited by the BJP's move on internal reservation, seemed to have voted GOP. Leaders like G Parameshwara and K H Muniyappa represent this spectrum.

And this is not counting the near-sweep of tribal constituencies for the Congress, at 14 out of 15 seats reserved for STs.

If one considers that the Muslims too shed their ambivalence and backed the GOP unequivocally, that it registered victories in all five regions (including six seats in the saffron-flavoured coast) and also won a majority of rural seats while splitting urban seats half and half, it completes the rainbow. And the 80-85% strike rate in the constituencies that Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra touched is what the party will hope can travel up the highway to the north of the country.

CONGRESS: 'HASTA' LA VISTA, BJP

- PM MODI'S CHARISMA FAILS TO WIN VOTES FOR BJP
- JDS SUFFERS THE WORST-EVER DEFEAT
- ELECTING LP LEADER, CM TO BE TOUGH FOR CONG

RAHUL GANDHI, CONG LEADER
Poor people defeated crony capitalists in Karnataka... In the state, the hate market has closed down and shops of love have opened

NARENDRA MODI, PRIME MINISTER
We shall serve Karnataka with even more vigour in the times to come. Congratulations to the Congress for their victory. My best wishes to them in fulfilling people's aspirations

B S YEDIYURAPPA, BJP LEADER
We accept the mandate of the people with humility... BJP will continue to be the voice of people and we will work hard to strengthen the party

MAMATA BANERJEE, TMC CHIEF
This is the beginning of the end of the BJP before the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. People have voted against the arrogance and intolerance of BJP

AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge, KPCC president DK Shivakumar (L) and CLP leader Siddaramaiah after the party's massive victory in Karnataka, at the party office in Bengaluru on Saturday | VIJOO KUMAR T

DKS, Siddu in CM race; Kharge out

DEVARAJ B HIREHALLI @ Bengaluru

THE race for chief minister's chair is now between KPCC president D K Shivakumar and Congress Legislature Party leader Siddaramaiah as AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge late on Saturday evening ruled himself out for the post.

Kharge said he will now focus on winning the 2024 Lok Sabha polls after gaining much confidence as Congress swept the Karnataka election, ridding South India of BJP rule.

The party's newly elected legislators, who have been instructed to rush to Bengaluru, will elect their leader at a meeting slated to be held in a hotel on Sunday evening. The meeting is a mere formality as the decision is left to the party high command, a source said.

The leaders, including AICC general secretaries Randeep Singh Surjewala and K C Venugopal, arrived at the decision to choose between Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar for the CM post in a meeting held at Kharge's residence.

Kharge, a Dalit strongman, has put the 'Dalit CM' issue on the backburner for the sake of the party, in the process ruling out another CM aspirant, ex-deputy CM G Parameshwara. The latter and K H Muniyappa, also a Dalit leader and a strong party loyalist, may be placated with deputy CM posts.

The Veerashaiva Lingayats lobbying for the post also cannot be ruled out. The name of M B Patil, among others, may also come to the fore.

Both Shivakumar and Siddaramaiah have a sway in Karnataka politics. The latter championed the interests of minorities and the former emerged as Vokkaliga community's leader in old Mysuru.

Vokkaliga leaders held a meeting in Bengaluru to back Shivakumar as CM and are likely to garner support of their community's religious heads. As for Siddaramaiah, his loyalists, including some MLAs, have also been backing him to the hilt for the top post.

RAMU PATIL & ASHWINI M SRIPAD @ Bengaluru

CONGRESS on Saturday swept the Assembly elections in Karnataka by securing a comfortable majority in the 224-member House, riding on a strong anti-incumbency wave against the BJP government and on its sustained campaign woven around five poll guarantees.

In a big win ahead of Assembly elections in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Telangana as well as the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, Congress won 136 seats with a vote share of 43%. Compared to the 2018 Assembly polls, its vote share went up by 5% and seats by 58.

Congress did well in all regions, except Coastal Karnataka, where BJP managed to hold its ground. In the Old Mysore region, the party made big gains at the expense of JDS, which took a big hit in a do-or-die battle. The regional party's vote share dropped from 18.36% to 13.3% and seats from 37 to 19. The party, which was hoping to play a crucial role in new government formation in case of a fractured mandate, ended up with worst-ever performance.

BJP managed to retain its 2018 vote share of 36.22% as it polled 36% this time. It gained new votes in the Old Mysore region. In Bengaluru, BJP managed to retain 15 of 28 seats. Surprisingly, BJP lost all seats in its stronghold Kodagu.

Congress' decisive victory came as a big boost for AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge's leadership. Kharge and other central leaders managed to ensure that the party worked as one cohesive unit. They also ensured the party leaders in the state stopped publicly expressing their chief ministerial ambition. BJP was never given an opportunity to exploit the Congress' fault lines.

Congress carefully crafted its strategy to show that its CM aspirants former CM Siddaramaiah and KPCC president DK Shivakumar were on the same page on all issues.

The poll guarantee cards that were distributed among voters were signed by both of them and all election material had their photographs. As the results started trickling in, Shivakumar turned emotional and attributed the win to party workers, while Siddaramaiah called it a mandate against PM Modi.

Congress' sustained campaign against corruption, 40% commission charge, price rise, unemployment and governance-deficit seems to have had an impact on voters.

Many senior BJP leaders, including ministers and party's national general secretary CT Ravi, lost, indicating that apart from local factors, there was anger against the ruling party. The saffron party's last-minute efforts made no impact on voters. BJP's experiment of fielding a large number of new faces to beat anti-incumbency and its social engineering of increasing reservation failed to impress voters. They were also not swayed by emotional issues, which took center-stage in the political debate at the fag end of electioneering. Even communal issues that hogged the headlines seem to have had no impact on voters.

Unlike in 2018, when BJP won 104 seats, this time party's Lingayat strongman BS Yediyurappa was not at the helm of affairs. The party went to polls with Basavaraj Bommai as CM. As soon as the results started coming in, Congress got into a celebratory mood with workers dancing outside its state headquarters. The party will soon start the process of electing the legislature party leader and next CM, which is a next big challenge. While BJP leaders will introspect on the reasons for the defeat, the results have put a big question mark on JDS's future.

GOVERNOR ACCEPTS BOMMAI'S RESIGNATION

Bengaluru: Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai submitted his resignation letter to Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot on Saturday evening after his party's defeat in the Assembly elections. A release from Raj Bhavan said the Governor accepted the resignation letter.

Sowmya loses by 17 votes

MOHAMMED YACOOB @ Bengaluru

BJP's CK Ramamurthy was declared elected from Jayanagar Assembly constituency in Bengaluru after several rounds of recounting on Saturday night. He won by a slender margin of 17 votes against Congress candidate Sowmya Reddy.

After 16 rounds of counting, Sowmya was declared elected by a margin of 294 votes. But the BJP candidate appealed for recounting. After recounting, the officials declared Ramamurthy the winner. But she sought recounting accusing the officials of foul play. BTM Layout MLA Ramalinga Reddy and father of Sowmya too arrived at the centre.

Tension prevailed when some Congressmen accused officials of working at the behest of BJP MP Tejasvi Surya and MLA R Ashoka.

TOP 5 WINNERS AND LOSERS

This Assembly elections have thrown up surprise results with many bigwigs of Congress, BJP and JDS winning and losing by a huge margin

Coastal K'taka BJP's face saver amidst rout

Mangaluru: BJP managed to hold on to its stronghold of Coastal Karnataka but had to settle for just 13 seats compared to 2018 when it had won 16 of the 18 constituencies. While the Congress improved its tally from 2 to 6, JDS drew a blank in the region. According to political pundits, Hindutva factor helped BJP to offset the anti-incumbency wave to a large extent | P4

In a big upset, Shettar loses by huge margin

Hubballi: Congress candidate Jagadish Shettar, who crossed over after being denied a ticket by BJP, was defeated by first-timer Mahesh Tenginkai of the saffron party in one of the biggest upsets of the polls. Shettar was aiming for seventh consecutive win, but voters stood solidly behind BJP, ensuring the highest-ever margin recorded in the poll history of Hubballi-Dharwad Central constituency | P5

JDS faces major blow in Ramnagara fortress

Bengaluru: JDS faced a humiliating defeat in Ramnagara district, the party's bastion in Old Mysuru region. It lost three of the four seats in the district. Its only victory was in Channapattana that was retained by former CM HD Kumaraswamy, who defeated BJP candidate CP Yogeshwar. His actor son Nikhil Kumaraswamy lost to Congress candidate Iqbal Hussain in Ramanagara constituency | P5

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Drugs worth ₹15K cr seized in biggest haul off Kerala coast

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Kochi

IN what may be the biggest ever drug haul in the country, the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) and the Navy have seized 2,500 kg of high-purity methamphetamine worth ₹15,000 crore from a ship off the Kerala coast, the anti-drug agency said on Saturday. A Pakistani national has been detained in connection with it.

Speaking to reporters about the joint operation with the Navy in Kochi on Saturday, NCB deputy director general (operations) Sanjay Kumar Singh termed it the largest methamphetamine seizure in India.

The NCB launched Operation Samudragupt in January 2022 following intelligence inputs on trafficking of heroin and other drugs over the maritime route in the Indian Ocean region. Under the operation, the NCB has so far seized over 3,200 kg meth, 500 kg heroin and 529 kg hashish.

The drug was sourced from Death Crescent, a region comprising Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran. The NCB got information on the movement of a mothership carrying a huge quantity of meth from the Makran coast bordering Pakistan and Iran.

The Indian Navy identified the route the vessel would take to distribute the contraband. Subsequently, it intercepted the vessel and seized 134 sacks of meth. A speedboat was also recovered from the mothership.

EVIDENCE OF PAKISTAN HAND

Sources said evidence of Pakistan's involvement in drug trafficking was clear as the sacks used to pack the contraband had the seals of Pakistani brands of rice and other food products

EXPRESS READ

Narco-terror module busted in J&K, 4 held

Srinagar: In a major operation against inter-state narco-terror smuggling syndicate originating from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), security forces arrested four smugglers involved in running the module. The four were arrested when they were in the process of exchanging narcotics and cash among themselves, an official said.